



Rotation Sunday School Lesson Plans

“Jacob & Esau”

Memory Verse: “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...” (Genesis 28:15)

Learning Centers Overview:

Video: Students will view the Superbook DVD “Jacob and Esau” and explore what wrestling with God means.

Computer Bible Lab: Explore the story of Jacob and Esau via the “Awesome Bible Stories” CD.

Art: Students will make a Jacob’s ladder toy to help them remember the story of Jacob.

Bible Games: Students will play at three stations of Bible games to dig deeper into the story of Jacob and Esau.

Bible Background

Learning Objectives for this Rotation

- From a human point of view, Jacob's story is one of sin and redemption. This redemption happened because God chose to make himself known to Jacob (twice).
- From God's point of view, it is the story of how God graciously works through his flawed children (like us) to fulfill his Covenant promise to raise up a kingdom of priests for the world.

Students will be able to:

- Find the stories of Jacob in Genesis, in the Old Testament.
- Retell the main parts of the story of Jacob in the correct order.

- Understand that God's plan of redemption/salvation is at work in Jacob's life and our own, despite our imperfections.
- Learn they can expect moments of undeserved spiritual connection and blessing, which can become life transforming experiences, which also lead us to reconcile with our brothers.
- State that the name "Israel" means "one who wrestles with God," and understand that this also describes the nature of our encounters and walk with God: surprising, not always easy, often mysterious, but always blessed.

Scriptures to Be Read and Taught

The stories of Jacob are personal, detailed and extensive. Certain workshops in this Rotation will focus on certain passages, while others take an "overview" approach.

Each of Jacob's stories needs to be seen within the context of his overall story, the story of sin and redemption, with a special emphasis on God's reaching out to Jacob the sinner, confirming his promise and presence.

For the purposes of describing this story arc in a helpful way to teachers, we have organized and labeled the traditional list of "scriptures to be covered" that you'd find here in a different way: using the language of a play.

The Story of Jacob's Sin and Redemption

ACT 1: Jacob and Esau

- Genesis 25:24-28 The Birth of Esau and Jacob
- Genesis 25:29-34 Esau trades away his birthright to Jacob for stew
- Genesis 27:1-35 Jacob pretends to be Esau to receive Isaac's blessing

- Genesis 27:41-44 Jacob escapes Esau's fury by fleeing to Uncle Laban

Interlude: God steps in

- Genesis 28:10-19 Jacob dreams of the staircase to heaven at Bethel.

ACT 2: Jacob and Laban, Jacob becomes a family man

- Genesis 29:15-30 Jacob marries Rachel and but gets Leah instead
- Genesis 31:1-3 Jacob decides to stop working for Laban and go home
- Genesis 32:3-7a Jacob begins the journey home to see Esau

Interlude: God steps in again

- Genesis 32:22-30 Jacob wrestles with God at night and gets named "Israel."

ACT 3: Jacob Returns to Reconcile with Esau

- Genesis 33:1-10 Jacob and Esau reconcile

There will be several key verses depending on the workshop you are in. The following is especially *for teachers* because it says so much about how God gives us all a wake up call, and the transforming nature of our personal encounters with God.

*Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,
"Surely the Lord is in this place — and I did not know it!"*

Genesis 28:16b

Additional insights and teaching points can be found in each workshop within this set.

Bible Background

Let's get right to the most important background: *Jacob is us*.

While it's interesting and perhaps even important in some traditions to understand the stories of Jacob as biographical (i.e. "history"), they are much more important than that issue. They are stories about you and me.

- I'm a sinner
- I've grabbed for more than I deserve
- I've fled
- I've fallen in love
- I've been cheated and been a cheater
- I'm someone who dreams of encountering angels and God — of feeling spiritually connected
- I have wrestled at midnight with the unknown, only to discover it was God
- I've had to come crawling back and make peace

There are many great stories in the Old Testament, but Jacob's is one of the few that feels personal and wholly plausible. Unlike Joseph's story, which also tells a personal story of redemption — *from being thrown into a well to becoming 2nd in command of an empire* — Jacob's story resonates on a personal level because we've all been there (or know someone who has). *Sibling rivalry, a conniving parent, in-law trouble, and returning to face the music*, these are all familiar human experiences. Unfortunately, some lesson writers turn these into mere morality plays. But these stories don't exist to counsel us about family troubles.

These stories remind us that it is within our very real troubles and real families, that God descends to give us a glimpse of something more, a stairway from heaven, and a blessing that he would always be with us — no matter what.

"Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go."

Genesis 28:15

It is in the midst of our totally undeserving and sinful lives that God literally and figuratively and unexpectedly grabs us, allows us to wrestle with him, and at daybreak, blesses us, instead of abandoning us.

Jacob deserves nothing. In fact, even at the end of the story you're still not sure you'd trust him with your last nickel. He's not a man after God's own heart like David was. He's given none of the tests of faith that his father Abraham passed. He's not even a follower of the law like King Saul or Caiaphas. When Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,*" he had already used that line on Jacob.

What Jacob is: somebody who has encountered God, and is both literally and figuratively trying to turn his life around (to go back to Esau). And he is somebody God made a promise to, and God will keep that promise, whether Jacob deserves it or not.

In the middle of Jacob's wholly undeserving life, God gives Jacob a glimpse, a grab, and an un-earned blessing.

...And Jacob begins to change.

Jacob was nicknamed "the over-reacher" or "the grasper" because apparently he was born holding onto Esau's foot. And you know you're in the middle of something greater than a mere biography when the story arc shows you that God helped him grasp something new and better. A vision of angels at work, God by his side, and willing to throw down with us for the sake of God's greater plan.

And when WE grasp that same point, we become part of that plan — the Kingdom of Priests — a nation dedicated to the reconciliation ministry of God, made perfect in Jesus Christ.

Some Background on Jacob in the Bible

Jacob is the third "patriarch" (or "Founding Father") of the Bible, the first being his grandfather Abraham, and then his father Isaac. From Jacob will come the 12 sons of Israel, the 12 tribes, and the most famous son: Joseph. (We can't change the fact that these are all men, but we can strive to help our children see beyond gender, to see that they are all human, just like us.)

Fascinatingly (and thankfully), the stories of the first 3 patriarchs feature love stories with strong women. Abraham had Sarah, Isaac his beautiful Rebekah, and Jacob his beloved Rachel. Through their children, God is fulfilling his promise (his "covenant") first given to Abraham. It was a promise to create from this family a nation that would function like a "Kingdom of Priests" at the crossroads of the Middle East. It is a theme echoed in 1 Peter 2:9, "*You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,*

God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Jacob may have lived around the year 1800 B.C. His stories in Genesis weren't written down for at least a thousand years afterwards (during the times of the Kings), so it is safe to assume that we are reading something more important than "history" as we think of it. Jacob's story is designed to teach fundamental truths — *about where we have come from, what human beings are like, how God deals with us, and what God is trying to do with us.* Like Abraham's story, Jacob's story tells us that our God is personal and personally transforming.

Jacob's story arc also reminds us that salvation is not earned. Salvation is ours because of who God is and because of what God does. Jacob had cheated his father and brother and was fleeing when God caught up to him the first time.

Jacob's is a story about amazing grace.

Jacob's story also reminds us to expect the presence of God, regardless of how undeserving we think we are. And so we watch for holy moments (staircases and angels), and learn to recognize God in our struggles.

Jacob's new Hebrew name, "Isra-el," means, "One Who Wrestles with God." It's the perfect name for the scoundrel Jacob, but also the perfect metaphor for understanding ourselves as well. We doubt, we fall, we struggle, we think we have hold of God — only to discover that it's really God who has hold of us.

After studying these stories, may your children and teachers exclaim like Jacob, *"Surely the Lord is in this place!"*

The Jacob and Esau Lesson Set was extensively revised in 2015 to reflect the points of view in this new Bible Background. In addition to creating several workshop lessons that teach the entire story arc, the Writing Team has also created several workshops that focus on Jacob's life-changing, life-applying encounters with God at the stairway to heaven, and wrestling match. See the Lesson Summary for more details.

Written by (Rev.) Neil MacQueen for the Rotation.org Writing Team

Copyright 2015, Rotation.org

Permission granted to use for non-commercial teaching purposes.

Holy Word Cinema (Video)

Memory Verse: “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...” (Genesis 28:15)

Preparation

1. Review Bible Background notes and read scripture passages mentioned to familiarize yourself with this month’s Bible story.
2. Pray for the children and for your teaching of the lesson.

Materials List:

- DVD Player
- Projector
- DVD: Jacob & Esau

Summary of Lesson Activities

The video in this lesson covers the entire Jacob and Esau narrative, but the lesson focuses on Jacob's wrestling match with God in Genesis 32.

Students will participate in a number of preparatory and follow-up activities surrounding the viewing of the video "Jacob and Esau: The Stolen Birthright" (22 minutes, from the new Superbook series). They will focus on how to understand and apply the metaphorical meanings embedded in the story ("wrestling with God at night," etc). Their lesson will conclude with two reflection activities.

Note the younger children adaptations at the end of this lesson plan.

Scripture

Passage: Genesis 32:22-32

The video in this lesson covers the entire Jacob and Esau story.
The lesson focuses on the wrestling story in Genesis 32.

Key Verse: "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have wrestled with God and with men and have overcome." Genesis 32:28

Objectives for the Rotation and this lesson

For the rotation objectives, see the Bible Background.

Objectives for this Workshop

For this lesson's objectives, see the Summary above.

Preparation

- Read the Bible story and Background.
- Preview the Video.
- Write out the Synonyms for "wrestle" on index cards.
- Write out the questions on index cards that you'll be giving to students prior to the video.

Supplies

- Video - Jacob & Esau (New Super Book Series)
- DVD Player / projector
- Whiteboard, marker
- Index cards
- "My name is" nametags, blank nametags, markers.

Note to the Teacher:

In this lesson you will be introducing your students to some of the life-applying "metaphors" found in this story, *the meaning of which* will not be immediately obvious to most of your students, but hopefully this lesson plan will change that!

The ability to see, understand, and apply metaphorical meanings found in Bible stories are important spiritual and life application skills. Developmentally speaking, however, the ability to think metaphorically only begins to develop around the age of 7 or 8. It is also an ability that can be nourished (or malnourished) by parents, educators, and culture. Thus, some of your students will find it easier to see the deeper meanings in this story, while others may struggle. This lesson is designed to help all "wrestle" with this story's meaning for the student's life, --and make that skill part of their spiritual and Bible study toolkit.

There are several metaphors in the story to unpack:

- Not knowing who or what you are (really) wrestling. (We say that God is a still small voice, but he also sometimes prods, pushes, and puts us in a half nelson!)
- Wrestling with God. Struggling, grasping, questioning.
- Thinking you've won, only to be kicked (reminded who is in control).
- Being blessed with a new name that describes your relationship with God (what name would describe your relationship with God?)
- God wrestled with Jacob in the dark, then leaves at daybreak. (how often God is like that!)

You will also note that reading of the scripture comes AFTER the video. This is intentional as the lesson questions focus on the "wrestling" story, whereas, the video they have just seen covers the entire story of Jacob. By reading the scripture after the video, it will refocus them, and give them time to think of the answers to the questions you have given them on index cards.

Lesson Plan

Open

An Exercise in Understanding Metaphors

1. Write out synonyms for the word "wrestle" on index cards (see list below). Pass them out to your students. (How many cards/synonyms is up to you.) Explain synonyms are words that have the same meaning, like "wrestle" and "struggle."

Why use index cards in this lesson? Because it gives them time to think, hands them something to focus on and anticipate, and signals to each that they will be expected to participate.

2. Ask each student to use their synonym for "wrestle" in a sentence, and have them share it with the class.

At first, they will likely use their synonym for "wrestle" in a sentence about wrestling with a person. Such as, "I fight with my brother."

3. Now write out or post these starter sentences on the board. Whoever has the word "argue" or "battle" (and so on) must complete the sentence you've written.

I argue on Sunday with the part of me that doesn't want to...

I battle with my desire to...

I have a hard time grasping why God won't/doesn't...

I fight my feelings of _____ when I go to church.

I question why I have to _____.

I struggle to forgive people who _____.

Here are the Synonyms for "wrestle" to be written on the cards:

argue

battle

trying to understand, to grasp

fight

question

struggle

Preparing to View the Video

Prior to showing the video, pass out two copies of each of the following questions on index cards. Tell them to be prepared to answer their question at the end of the video. If you have a student who can't read, read the question to them as you give it to them.

Questions for Cards:

- When Jacob realized that the "man" he was wrestling was actually God, what do you think went through his mind?
- What did Jacob think he would gain by winning his wrestling match with God?
- What do you think God wanted from Jacob? (Hint: It's the same thing God wants from you. Trying to get your attention, let you know he's part of your life.)
- How do you think God felt about having to wrestle Jacob? Wrestling with you?
- Who really "won" the wrestling match?
- What do you think Jacob learned from his wrestling match with God?
- How do you think the wrestling match prepared Jacob to reconcile with his brother Esau?

Dig Into the Word - Show the Video

Jacob & Esau: The Stolen Birthright
(22 minutes from the New Superbook Series)
Ages 6-11.

CBN is the distributor of this famous series.**
See synopsis below.

The video covers the entire Jacob and Esau narrative, which is important to understanding some important things about Jacob's encounter with God. Namely, it was unearned and unexpected. *But that is who our God is.*

Post-Video Follow-up:

Have the class read Genesis 32:22-32, the Bible's story of Jacob and God's wrestling match. This will refocus them on that particular story which they just saw in the video. Prior to reading, alert them that you will be asking them to answer the questions you gave them on the index cards following the reading (i.e. "so pay attention!")

After the reading, ask them to answer the questions you gave them on the cards, then continue with the following questions:

1. Is questioning God a sin? (no, but acting like you know everything is!)
2. How is trying to be faithful a struggle, -a wrestling match? (give examples)
3. How was Jacob feeling the night before meeting Esau? (afraid, he had split his family and sent some ahead).

4. How might his encounter with God have helped Jacob follow through on his plan to reconcile with Esau?
5. What would you ask God for at the end of *your* wrestling match?
(We already have God's blessing, so we don't need that!)
6. When you walk out of this wrestling match lesson, who do you need to be reconciled with, ...make peace with??

Some thoughts to share:

Sometimes when we are wrestling with an issue, we don't realize that it is God who is making us wrestle with it. Important choices are not always easy to make. We often resist God's opinion, and want our own way.

Jacob probably thought God's blessing would make his life easier, but it did not (his son Joseph would be sold into slavery, remember?)

God was probably not surprised he would have to grapple with Jacob. God knows us well! You could say that God EXPECTS us to struggle, and thus, struggling can bring us closer to God, and teach us important lessons.

God's love is not offended by our questions and doubts (our struggles). God invented us this way. When we realize we are not perfect, it makes us grateful for God's love and forgiveness. This story assures us.

The metaphor of wrestling at night can have several meanings. When it's dark, we can't see well, our fears can get the best of us, and we don't always understand what's going on around us. It can be a time to wait before it's light. The dawn is a metaphor for a time when it is time to get up, stop struggling, see more clearly, and go about our day's work. There are other places in the Bible where this contrast between dark and light is used. Isaiah 9: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

The wrestling match happened BEFORE Jacob and Esau were reconciled. God doesn't wait for us to do everything right. God is always our God, before, during, after, forever.

When you realize God is in your life, and has blessed you, you want to make peace with others.

Ask: What are some words that mean the opposite of "wrestle" or "struggle"?
Peace, surrender, let go, accept, relax.

We don't always want to be in a struggle, it will wear you out. (If you have time, demonstrate this by seeing how long students can keep their hands pushed together.) Struggle should lead to peace. Conflict to reconciliation.

Reflect - Nametags

Pass out a sticky nametag that says, "*Hello, my name is*" on it. Have each student write the name: "*Israel, because I too wrestle with God*" -and put it on.

Now take a second blank nametag and have students write this fill-in sentence on it, filling in the blanks. Have students complete, and wear and share their two nametags.

Fill-in-the-blank phrase:

"I'm like Jacob in the Bible, I sometimes struggle to _____, and I question _____ . But God still _____ me."

Conclude with the Fist and Hand Prayer

Students hold their hands in front of them, clenching them and releasing to match the prayer:

Lord,

(clench) When I think you are not real or are not with me, (open) open my eyes to see your presence.

(clench) When I think I know everything, (open) open my mind to your wisdom and help.

(clench) When times feel dark and scary, (open) relax my fears with your present spirit.

(clench) When I have questions and doubts, (open) open my heart to receive your word.

(clench) When I think I don't need forgiveness or don't want to forgive, (open) open my hands to those to friendship and peace.

Lord, you have blessed us with important lessons to wrestle with, and with a peace that passes all understanding. Hold on to us both night *and* day, we pray.

Amen

Additional Suggestions

Adaptations - Younger Children

- For non-readers, reduce the lesson objective's metaphor down to one: wrestling with God.
- Simplify the synonym cards to three words: wrestling/understanding/questioning. ("Fighting/battling/grasping" with God is too high concept.)
- Spend less time on the follow-up questions and more time helping them think about their new nametags. Simplify the second nametag sentences to:

I am like Jacob. I struggle, I make peace.

(Even though some can't spell or read, they can draw the letters if you write them BIG, and remember what they mean, or have an adult read it to them.)

- While the young ones will enjoy the Superbook video, a good alternate and shorter video is theRead and Share Bible DVD, (Tommy Nelson), the episode on Jacob and Esau is found on Volume 1.

Written by Neil MacQueen for the Rotation.org Writing Team

*****The recommendation to use the video in this lesson is not an endorsement of CBN's other products or points of view.***

Copyright © 2015 by Rotation.org

Printed from <http://www.rotation.org>

Synopsis of the Jacob and Esau DVD (from Superbook)

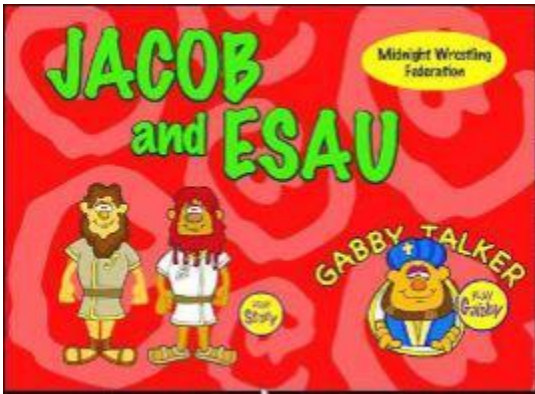
In the Quantum yard, during a spirited water fight, Joy accidentally gets Gizmo's inner workings wet and he fritzes out, suddenly believing he belongs to Joy. Chris can't seem to correct the problem and is furious with Joy, saying he'll never forgive her. SUPERBOOK intercedes and whisks the kids back to the days of Jacob and Esau. The two brothers compete over many things, but when Esau gives up his birthright and Jacob tricks his father out of a blessing they become estranged for many years thereafter. Chris and Joy witness the animosity between the two brothers and the separation it has caused them for years. Chris begins to think about his own unforgiving attitude with Joy. When Jacob finally goes to Esau and his brother finds it in his heart to forgive Jacob, Chris takes the cue and forgives Joy as well and the two are best friends once again. And they work together to repair Gizmo's still-comical malfunctioning microchip.

Computer Bible Lab

Memory Verse: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go..." (Genesis 28:15)

Teacher preparation: Review the Bible background information and read the Scripture passages for this month's Bible story. Then preview the software used in the Computer Bible Lab this month so you are familiar with it and able to assist students to maneuver through the programs.

Summary of Lesson Activity



This lesson plan walks students through most of the Jacob story using the Awesome Bible Stories CD interactive software, **In addition**, this lesson plan is one of two in the Writing Team set that also focuses on the story of Jacob's wrestling match with God in Genesis 32 — a story rich with life application.

Importantly, prior to wrestling with God, Jacob prays to God for help in preparation for meeting Esau, thus those scriptures are included in this lesson (though not in the software). After seeking God's help, Jacob wrestles with God and receives confirmation of the blessing he previously received in his Genesis 28 encounter when he dreamed of the stairway to heaven. Yet in Genesis 32, Jacob's encounter with God is more personal and contains a wonderful life application for how we understand our relationship with God — we struggle with a mysterious presence as if in the dark, we try to grasp God, we think we have God in hand, but God gets the last word. God confirms his promise to Jacob, and bestows on Jacob (and thus all of us) a new name, "*Israel — he who wrestles with God.*"

Scripture

Genesis 32: 3-12 Jacob prepares and prays prior to meeting Esau

Genesis 32: 22-31 Jacob wrestles with God, is blessed, and is struck in the hip

Objectives for the Rotation

See Bible Background

Objectives for this particular workshop

- Students will be able to recount all the key episodes in the Jacob and Esau story.
- Students will think of themselves as "Israel" too — those who call upon and encounter a mysterious God, seek his blessing, and wrestle with what it means to believe in God and be his child.

Preparation

- Read Bible Background, scripture and lesson.
- Preview the software and play the wrestling game.
- Make copies of the worksheet.

Materials List

- Bibles
- Software: Awesome Bibles Stories CD (Sunday Software)
- copies of the worksheet attached at the end of this lesson at rotation.org
- Whiteboard (appropriate marker)

Lesson Plan

Welcome your students and introduce what they'll be studying and doing in today's Computer workshop. As you tell them the following steps, write the steps on the board so they won't be so anxious about "when" they are going to get to each software option on the CD. This will also help your helpers know what to expect.

- Tell them that **Awesome Bible Stories CD is the opening Bible study** for today.
- Tell them that they will work their way through the Jacob and Esau story, answering several questions found on the printable worksheet *attached to this lesson at rotation.org*. (This is the same worksheet provided at Sunday Software's website for use with Awesome Bible Stories CD. Used with permission.)

- Then tell them that you'll be taking a brief break from the computers to hear a Bible story, then return for a game, quiz, and fun reflection activity at the computer.

Instructions for the teacher and lesson plan steps

- 1. Have students play through the animated story on the software and answer/discuss the questions on the worksheet as you go.** (The worksheets can be done: a) with the teaching helpers at each computer; or b) students working independently, then reconvening as a class to discuss their answers.) Feel free to follow-up on each worksheet question with additional insights and questions.

The CD breaks the story into four episodes:

- (1) Jacob and Esau are Born, Esau sells his birthright.
- (2) Jacob, Laban, Rachel and Leah.
- (3) Jacob wrestles with the angel.
- (4) Jacob reconciles with Esau.

- 2. Once all children have played through the animated story have them gather away from the computers (or turn away from computer and face you) and then read to them in *dramatic* fashion the story of Jacob and God's wrestling match**

Genesis 32: 3-12 Jacob prepares and prays prior to meeting Esau

Genesis 32: 22-31 Jacob wrestles with God, is blessed, and is struck in the hip

and make the following points:

- Jacob's encounter with God happened after he sought God's help. How do you seek God's help?
- At first, it is not clear who is wrestling with Jacob. A man? Sometimes that's how it feels when God is present. You find it hard to believe that God wants to be with you, and is the one making you struggle with decisions you are trying to make (such as, how to approach Esau).
- God doesn't mind wrestling with Jacob or with us. He knows we have questions and doubts. That's what the name "Isra-el" means in the Hebrew language. God calls us "the

people who wrestle with God ("El"). What things do you find are hard to do as much as God wants? **Pick one:** *forgive someone who has done you wrong, love people who don't like you, admit when you're wrong, say your sorry.*

- The funny thing is that Jacob thinks he has pinned God. How does God let him know who the boss is?



3. Return to the computers and play the Jake & the Midnight Angel game. It has story questions in-between rounds that will act as a review.

Note: The worksheet reverses the order of when to play the wrestling game and then the Gabby reflection activity. Here we're doing the wrestling game BEFORE the reflection activity. Your students will probably want to keep playing the game, so, if needed, promise them they can return at the end of class.

4. Conclude with the Gabby Talker reflection activity: learning and practicing the words of apology and reconciliation. See the suggestions on the worksheet. If you have several computers, assign different "apology" tasks to each worksheet.

This activity "practices" the language of reconciliation — making peace with others. Give students at their computers 3 minutes to construct a talking Gabby reflection, then have the class travel to each computer to hear each apology played out-loud. You might consider having students construct:

The apology Jacob should have made to Esau.

The apology Esau should have made to Jacob.

The apology we should make to God for being difficult, deceitful, and greedy children.

Adaptations

For non-readers: Make sure you have helpers at each computer, or consider projecting the software to them and leading them through it as a group. The wrestling game should be easy enough for them, but they will need the words in the reflection activity read to them.

For those short on time: Skip lesson step 2. The wrestling story is briefly told in step 1's interactive story on the CD.

Copyright, Use and Author Info: Copyright Neil MacQueen, www.sundaysoftware.com. Neil is a Sunday School teacher, Presbyterian minister, and owner of Sunday Software. You are welcome to use these lessons provided this attribution remains with them.

Art:

Memory Verse: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go..." (Genesis 28:15)

Web link of original lesson plans:

<http://www.rotation.org/topic/wt-jacob-and-esau-art-1>

Supplies:

- Superbook Jacob & Esau DVD "Bible Background" section
- TV/DVD player
- Bible
- Illustrated storybook of this story.
- 3/8" ribbon. (Approx 6' per student) For ease of assembly, you'll want the middle ribbon used to connect the cards to be a different color.
- Pre-cut matte boards or store-bought coaster squares (which you'll sandwich together) or wooden blocks. You will want a ladder that's at least 5 board lengths long, six is good. You can purchase stacks of pre-cut "blank coaster squares" from a source such as Amazon. They are about \$8 for 50 and are perfect for this project. Alternately, purchase matte board from your local craft supply and cut on paper cutter. (Poster board is not heavy enough.)
- Quick setting craft glue or hot glue gun.
- Scissors
- Markers and pencils
- Rulers

Students will learn about Jacob's Genesis 28 dream of angels going up and down the staircase (ladder) to heaven and consider how their own encounters with God can change their life. To remember the lesson, they will make a Jacob's Ladder toy that shows the key scriptures from the lesson and shows a key illustration of the story.

This is not a simple project, but it's fun and the kids (and their siblings) won't be able to put down the finished project. Thus, it will help cement the lesson into memory as they play with it. Like the stone Jacob set up after dreaming of the ladder, the Jacob's Ladder toy will help students, and all those who see it, remember this amazing event, and its meaning.

This lesson has 3 different options for making the Jacob's Ladder toy: 1. Make one using cards. 2. Make one using wood. 3. Purchase pre-made.

[Written by Neil MacQueen]

Scripture

Passage: Genesis 28:10-22

Key/Memory Verse: (These get written on the ladder)

1. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go. Genesis 28:15
2. How awesome is this place! This is the house of God, the gate of heaven. Genesis 28:17

Objectives for the Rotation

See [Bible Background](#).

Objectives for this Workshop

Among the stories of Jacob and Esau is this key story of Jacob's first encounter with God and the angels at the "stairway" to heaven (Genesis 28). This Art Workshop lesson, as well as Art [2], are the only ones in this lesson set that focuses on that particular story, but both do it in a very memorable way.

Students will learn that Jacob had an "unearned" spiritual experience, which not only holds out hope to the rest of us sinners! ...it also tells us about God's character, and how God chooses to deal with his less than perfect children. Making the Jacob's Ladder toy will serve as a great reminder of that encounter, and encourage students to consider and expect their own encounter with God.

Preparation

- Read Bible Background, scripture and lesson.
- **Decide which version of the Jacob's Ladder toy your students will construct:**
 1. Full Construction with coaster/matte board cards and glue. [See instructional video](#).
 2. Full Construction with wooden blocks and brass tacks. See the instructions linked in the Adaptations section of this lesson.
 3. Purchase the pre-made Ladder toy from Oriental Trading and focus on adding onto the blocks the scripture text and an illustration of Jacob's encounter with God. (Recommended for young children and those with very short class times.)
- For making your own...
View the instruction video and make your own Jacob's ladder *in advance* so that you know how

to teach others how to make one. At first, it looks hard, but if you follow the instructions, it's really just about repeating the steps for each board you attach.

- Purchase material for board squares.
- Purchase ribbon, approximately 6' per student.
- Purchase fast-drying glue, such as "Fabri-glu." Do not use plain white glue. Alternately, have some glue-guns ready. Apply thinly!
- Have the instructional video que-ed up on a laptop computer for the class as a reference. It can be downloaded from Youtube and copied to a computer using a free online service, such as, <http://www.clipconverter.cc/>.

Below are two Jacob's Ladder Instructional Videos. (playable online)

Each shows a different point of view on how to make the same thing. Either can be used in your class to be the tutorial for students. Note that each card has a different look, which helps in construction. (Use the pause button in-between steps.)

The links to these videos are found below in the lesson plan.

Lesson Plan

Open

Welcome your students and introduce what they'll be studying and doing in today's Art Workshop.

Take out a Jacob's Ladder (one you've made or bought) and ask the students if they know what it is. *Just let it hang there.* Then ask for a show of hands of how many know *how it works.*

Now give your Jacob's Ladder to someone who *didn't* raise their hand and see if they can figure out how to play with it. (This is an important step that leads to your upcoming opening point.) Have them pass it to someone else who's never played with one, and then, eventually pass it to someone who thinks they know how it works.

Now let everyone make the ladder blocks flip and say: "Okay, you've figured out how to make the ladder work, but HOW does it work? Any guesses? Are the blocks falling down through the ribbons? (It's a bit of an optical illusion, isn't it.)

Make this point: Today we are going to read a Bible story about Jacob, the person who this toy is named after. Jacob dreamed he saw a ladder going up to heaven, and angels coming up and down that ladder, and then he saw God standing beside him and blessing him. He was amazed and probably a bit confused about what it all meant. But Jacob's encounter with God changed his life. I hope it changes yours too.

Dig

Watch: "Bible Background for Jacob and Esau" DVD (8 minutes) to refresh students of Jacob's story.

Read & Discuss Genesis 28:10-22, the story of Jacob's dream. (15 minutes)

Suggestion: This is a story with a great visual. Read this from a storybook Bible that has illustrations of this story. Or have an illustration ready.

Prior to reading the story, remind your students where this story falls in the Jacob narrative: He has just cheated his brother Esau out of his inheritance, and is fleeing to his Uncle Laban's country, to escape his brother's anger. Some blessing!

After reading the story, discuss these questions:

- Ask: At this point in his life, is Jacob a good person or bad person? (He had just cheated Esau and was fleeing.)
- Ask: What does it say about God's *character* that he would appear to a cheater like Jacob, promise to always go with him (v15), and keep his Covenant promise to make Jacob's family into a great nation? (v 14) (— God keeps his promises to us, no matter who we are or what we've done. This is love, grace, forgiveness. We don't earn God's blessings or presence, he freely gives them to us.)
- Say: This story is the first time God has spoken to Jacob. Take a close look at verses 16 and 17.

Ask: What are some of the words Jacob uses to describe his encounter with God and the ladder? (the NRSV uses the words: "afraid" and "awesome")

- Say: From that moment onward, after meeting God and feeling blessed, Jacob's life would never be the same. That's what happens when you feel God standing beside you — when you

feel God speaking to you — when you know God has blessed you and will always be with you. **Like Jacob, you begin to change.**

Ask: How can we tell if YOUR life is being changed by God? What changes would we see in the way you acted towards others?

How would your attitude change about coming to church?

About reading the Bible? praying? giving?

Say: In a later chapter of Jacob's story, he will even change how he feels about his brother, and return to Esau seeking peace. That's another way God changes us, from being cheaters and being nasty, to being peaceful.

Do ~ Making Jacob's Ladder

The following instructions assume you are creating the card version. Instruction video linked below. For younger students, if you're using the pre-made Jacob ladders, read the younger student adaptation note at the end of this lesson.

Say: Just like Jacob set up a stone to remember his life-changing encounter with God, you are going to make a Jacob's ladder toy to take home and remember this lesson. This is going to take some real concentration on your part. Listen carefully and watch and do-as-I-do so that your ladder is a great reminder and not a mess!

Walk your students step-by-step through the construction of the Jacob's Ladder.

Press the pause button in-between steps, so that your students are working along with the video until everyone is ready to move onto the next step. Have extra helpers to make sure the ribbons and card blocks are properly assembled.

Use the [Cassidy Young instructional video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7PQFYmCwRQ) (music, no voice) at Youtube.

`<code>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7PQFYmCwRQ`

`</code>`

Alternately, you could use the [Tricia Morris instructional video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwKHPOVyVA) (narrated) at Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwKHPOVyVA>

(See notes in Preparation section of this lesson for how to download the video.)

(Note: If these links break, let us know. We've included the names of the youtube posters so that they can be found by searching, just in case.)

Tip: Drawing faint lines on the blocks/cards with a pencil and ruler, as seen in Tricia Morris video, may help students know where to place the ribbons and glue, and how to stack them in the right way.

Tip: In addition to the scripture you are writing on the cards, if you're using monochrome cards or blank white coasters, it helps to add some color and design to one side of the card. This not only helps in construction, but it makes the ladder more visually appealing when it flips.

Finishing Tips: If they are to go immediately out the door, tightly wrap the stacked cards with rubberbands so that students will not be tempted to use the ladder before the glue dries. If you have ten minutes of class time left, stack some books on them to press them tight. Fabri-Tacky Glu should take about 10 minutes to set. If you use hot glue, and not too much of it, it should take about 5 to 10 minutes. Students may need to pick them up later, so have them write their name somewhere on one of the ribbons.

Important Note About Adding the Scripture to the Cards/Blocks:

Prior to gluing the ribbons and boards together, lay them out side by side, and have the students write their first memory verse across all the boards. Then flip the boards over and write the second memory verse on the opposite side of the boards. Once the project is complete, and you play with the ladder the verses will appear to Scramble and then Unscramble. It will draw a lot of attention to those verses! The verses are listed at the top of this lesson plan. You may choose other verses/translations/ideas, if you'd like.

Prior to gluing the ribbons and while they are laid out side by side is also a good time to add *a little bit* of color or design to one side of the cards. It will make assembly easier, and make the flipping more visually interesting.

After the project is complete, students can add additional design elements.

Tip: Use a fast-drying glue, like "Fabri-Glu" from your local fabric store. It's like a "hot glue gun in a bottle." Do not use Elmer's glue, it will take way too long to set. Apply only a thin amount of glue so that it dries more quickly.

Closing - Make a Human Ladder

Hold hands and form a circle to form a "human Jacob's ladder." Make note that as the Body of Christ, we are connected, and thus, one person's blessing or encounter with God affects and uplifts us all!

One by one, **each student names a blessing in their life, and then sends a wave around the circle** (hands/arms will go up and down around the circle like a wave). When the wave goes around once it stops at the next person in the circle so they can get their turn to pray a blessing and send the wave. (i.e. You're sending a wave between each blessing.) Amen!

Bible Games

Memory Verse: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go..." (Genesis 28:15)

"The Great Jake Game Station Workshop"

(revised 2015)

Web link for original lesson plans:

<http://www.rotation.org/topic/wt-jacob-and-esau---games>

Summary of Lesson Activity

Teams of 2 or more students will 'rotate' to 3 different **game stations** where they will complete question-games about the Jacob stories. One team per station. Timekeepers at each station will supervise and keep a 'time score.' Questions and games are structured to make sure everyone has to participate, and if they don't know the answer, they can look it up. The winning team is announced when all teams have completed each station.

The station question/activities cover all the Jacob stories studied in this rotation set. Bible skills and life application are part of the games.

Unlike a conventional lesson, in this workshop, scripture will be read and discussed at the game stations.

Scripture

Please see the [Bible Background](#) for the complete list of scriptures.

Game content is being drawn from all the Jacob stories.

Students will be consulting their Bibles to answer questions if needed.

Objectives for the Rotation

[See the Bible Background for this set](#)

Objectives for this Workshop

- To reinforce Jacob and Esau story details through quiz-games.
- To improve various Bible skills, including: map reading, use of concordance, Bible dictionary, genealogy of patriarchs.
- Know more about God's character and grace by how God acts in these stories.
- Understand that God's grace/blessings to Jacob and to us are undeserved. God keeps his Covenant promises to individuals and to the world.

Preparation

- Read Bible Background, scripture and lesson plan.
- Prepare each game station using the instructions.
- Recruit helpers to staff each station.
- Make sure each station leader has a stopwatch — smartphones have them.
- Make sure you have multiple copies of this lesson plan as it tells each station leader what to say and ask.
- Print the scorecard (Scorekeeper.pdf) for teams to carry to each station (attached).
- Print the 'Family Tree' (Jacob-Tree-PDF.pdf) and 'Matching' (Match The Bible quote.pdf) for station 2 (attached).
- Print the 'Question Cards' (Jacob Esau Question Cards.pdf) attached.

Supplies

- See the instructions below for each game for supplies lists.
- Purchase some cheap "medals" or "cup trophies" in bulk for the "Awards Ceremony" reflection.

Lesson Plan

A typical lesson plan has a reading of scripture followed by an activity. In this Games Station Workshop, students will both read, learn, and reflect at each station as they play the games.

Note to the Station Leader/Timekeeper

Print the scoresheet attached to this lesson at rotation.org. Use your best judgment on how to adjust the questions and amount of help you decide to give your students. Just keep it fair and do not let one student dominate the group. Keep track of time per each station's instructions and remember to write it on your Team's scorecard before they leave your table. Do not let them see their score as that will encourage them to compare how well each team is doing. Pay special attention to the instructions which keep one person from dominating the play and answers.

Open

Welcome students and introduce today's lesson plan by saying:

Today, we are going to play several games to help us remember key details about the stories of Jacob and Esau. In a moment, we'll split into teams, and then teams will rotate to different game stations to complete four tasks there. You will be TIMED at each station, so work as quickly as possible. You will need to know the right answer or look it up in order to keep moving. The team that has the best time after completing all three

stations will win. You will not know your score or any other team's score until the very end, so don't freak out if it takes extra time for some questions or players.

Split into teams.

Begin the Game Stations!

Station 1: The Bible Skills Relay

Supplies Needed:

- ◆ Map of Israel showing Jerusalem and Bethel
- ◆ Bible Dictionary or Concordance
- ◆ 1 Bible for each student
- ◆ Timer that shows seconds (such as a cellphone timer)

Note to timekeeper: *Depending on # of students, you may assign two players per card. Do not let one person dominate all the answers.*

Lay the study books and numbered question cards face-down on the table, and say: When I say "go," the first person on your team will flip over the first question card and start looking for the answer. When you find them in these resources, quickly tell me so that the next player can start looking for the answer to the second card's question. I will write down your total time it took you to answer all these cards. Are you ready?

Write the numbers on one side of the cards, and the questions on the other. Lay them question-side down in front of the students.

Card 1: According to Genesis 28, what happened to Jacob near the town of Beth-el? You can only answer this once, so do not guess. If you get it wrong, you will have 45 seconds added to your time score.

Card 2: Find the town of Bethel on a map of Israel and show it to the scorekeeper.

Card 3 : Using one of your Bible resources, show the scorekeeper what the word "Beth-el" means in Hebrew.

Card 4: Find two other Bible stories that happened many years after Jacob's story that mention the city of Bethel. Show them to the scorekeeper. (Use the concordance or Bible dictionary.)

Answers:

Card 1: At Bethel Jacob dreams of a stairway to heaven with angels coming up and down and God standing at the top. God blesses Jacob.

Card 2: Bethel is found (10 miles) north of Jerusalem.

Card 3: "Beth-el" means "house of God" in Hebrew.

Card 4: Some of many possibilities: Joshua conquered Bethel after Jericho (Joshua 8:1-17; 12:7-9,16). One of the first places the Ark of the Covenant was set up (Judges 20:18, 26-28; 21:2). Jereboam set-up golden calves in Bethel for his people to worship.

Station 2: The Family Tree Station

Supplies Needed:

◆ Print the Jacob's Family Tree **attached** at end of this lesson on rotation.org. It has a blank tree, a solution tree, and just the names. Cut the names into squares. (**Tip:** Don't cut the names the same size as the box they fit in.)

Depending on how well you think your students will do, you may decide to pre-place some of the name clues on the tree to help them get started. Just remember to do this for each team! You may also choose to give them one "hint." See game instructions below.

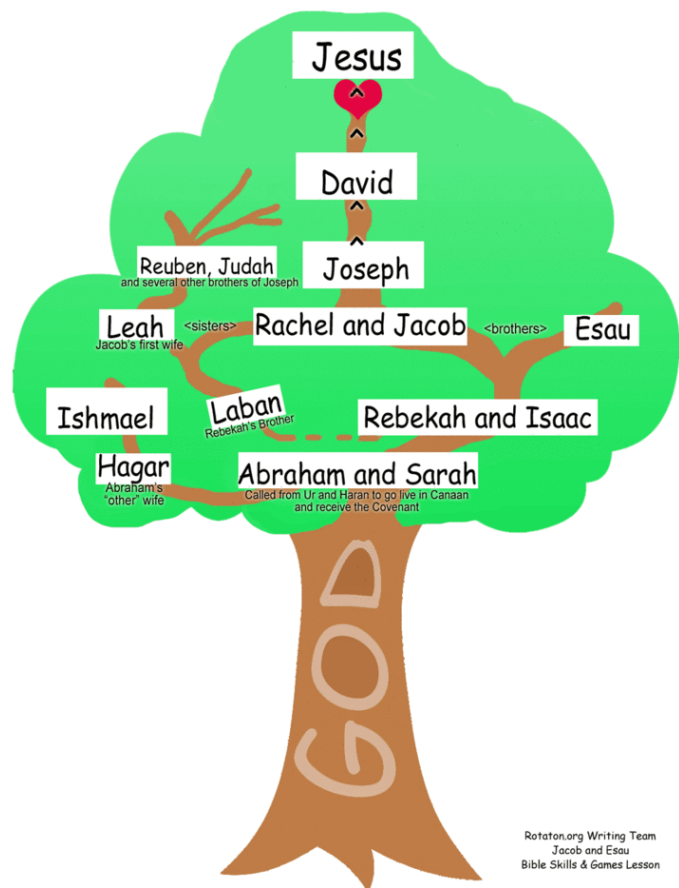
◆ Print and share copies of the "Who Said It" document (Match the Bible quote.pdf) **attached** to the end of this lesson at rotation.org.

1. Assemble the Family Tree Game:

Lay out the name squares in random order and say: When I say "go," put the names on the tree in the correct order. When you think you have them correct, raise your hand and I will PAUSE the clock to tell you how many are correct. You will only get one pause.

If any are incorrect, I will tell you which ones are wrong, but I will not tell you where they go. I will then un-pause the clock and you can take more time to get them in the right order. You will only get a total of 5 minutes but should work fast to reduce your time.

When you think you have them in the right order, yell STOP! I will then stop timing you and record your time. I will then tell you how many you got



Rotation.org Writing Team
Jacob and Esau
Bible Skills & Games Lesson

right and wrong. For each one that is still in the wrong place at the end I will add 25 seconds to your total time score.

2. Family "Who Said It?" Matching Game:

Say: Working together, match the "quote" from scripture with the person who said it.

For each correctly matched quote, you will get 10 seconds deducted from your total time score from the previous family tree game. You may use your Bibles to look them up, but no reference is provided.

I will give you a maximum of 5 minutes then score your paper. Ready?

See attachment for the matching quiz and answer key.

Station 3: Story Quiz Station!

Supplies Needed: The six questions cards, two bonus questions, and two cards labeled "Ask a Friend" - found in file attached to this lesson (print & cut.) A dice to roll. Bibles for each player. Pencil and paper for each team. For non-readers, make the questions True/False.

Say: I will be asking you six quiz questions about the story of Jacob and Esau. You will each be answering a question on your own. When I start the time, the first person rolls the dice to see which question they must answer. You can then turn over that question card and tell me the correct answer. If you need a hint, the questions contain the Chapter Number in Genesis, but not the verse. You must correctly answer the question before the next team member gets to roll the dice and pick a question.

State your answer and I will tell you if it is right or wrong. If you get it wrong twice, you must look up the hint.

If the number you roll is for a question someone else has already answered, keep rolling — until your roll matches a question that has not yet been answered. Team Members cannot help each other, so I would suggest each of you have your Bibles open to Genesis, should you need to use a hint.

I am also giving your team two "ASK A FRIEND" cards.

You can use them to invite one teammate to help you answer your question. If you don't need to use them, I will give you a bonus time deduction of 20 seconds for each unused Friend card from your total time.

When you are done rolling and answering, I will stop the clock and record your time. I will then ask your team two final Bonus questions about the meaning of these stories.

Are you ready? *Start the clock and start rolling...*

Question 1: What did Isaac say Jacob smelled like when Jacob put on his brother Esau's clothes and tricked his father Isaac into giving him the blessing due Esau? Hint: Genesis 27 (he smelled like the fields)

Question 2: What did Esau trade away to his brother for a pot of stew? Hint: Genesis 25 (his birthright)

Question 3: When Esau realized he had been tricked out of his birthright and became angry, what was the name of the Uncle who's house Jacob escaped to? Hint: Genesis 27. (His Uncle Laban's)

Question 4: On his way to hide out at Uncle Laban's, Jacob fell asleep and dreamed of what? Hint: Genesis 28 (A stairway to heaven)

Question 5: What was the trick that his Uncle Laban played on Jacob? Hint: Genesis 29 (Laban slipped Leah the older sister into Jacob's wedding tent instead of Rachel)

Question 6: The night before Jacob returned to make peace with his brother Esau, this amazing event happened. Hint: Genesis 32 (Jacob wrestled with God)

Stop the clock after they answer the last question correctly.

Timekeeper: Add their elapsed time to your scorecard.

Say: I have stopped the clock and I have two final Bonus questions for your team. Half of your team will be asked Bonus 1, and the other half Bonus 2. (*This keeps kids from dominating the answer*). I will give you two minutes to write down your answer.

* I will deduct: 5 seconds for a fair answer, 20 seconds for a good answer, and 40 seconds from your score for a great answer! However, I will add 15 seconds for a poor, and 25 seconds for an incorrect answer. Which of you will answer Bonus Question 1?

BONUS "MEANING" QUESTIONS:

Bonus 1: God twice blessed Jacob the Cheater, once in the dream of the staircase/ladder, and then when they wrestled until dawn. What do these two episodes tell you about God's character, about what God is like? Write down your answer using 2 or 3 sentences.

Bonus 2: If you had to explain to a young child what the stories of Jacob teach us, what would you tell them? Write down your answer using 2 or 3 sentences.

Timekeeper: Deduct time* from their scorecard.

Reflect - Awards Ceremony!

People these days make a fuss over giving kids "participation awards" ...but in today's lesson, *that is exactly the point*: God's award/blessing to Jacob and to us is undeserved. God keeps his Covenant promise to his difficult, cheating, but much beloved children. To reinforce this point, and take the focus off of "who won" you will lead this short but fun awards ceremony.

Collect some cheapie bulk award cups or medals. Feel free to label them with a sticker detailing the award. Play some "awards" music in the background, or have your helper sing the Olympic music 😊 during the awards presentation. Invite students to clap wildly for each other!

Some suggested goofy awards:

- Best Answerer Award
- Quickest Bible Page Turner
- Slow But Usually Right Award
- Nicest hair while answering award
- Person most likely to cheat like Jacob award

After handing out the 'special' awards, **announce the team scores**. As the winning team comes forward, give them their medals, and then, ***ask them if they learned today that only the "best" gets blessed.*** (they should say no). Show them that you have more medals (blessings) and ask them if everyone else deserves blessings too. (They should say 'yes'.) Invite the winning team to pass out your extra blessed-medals to everyone.

Finally....

Have each team read their written answers to the two "Bonus" answers from Station 3 — about God's character, and about "how to explain this story to a preschooler." Close with prayer that each of us who has been blessed, would become a blessing to others. Amen!

Additional Suggestions

Station Adaptations for Younger Students:

Station 1: Spell the word "Bethel" and let them match it by the shape of the letters, if not by reading it. Turn the "meaning of Beth-el" question into a multiple choice question.

Station 2: They should be able to arrange the names after you pronounce them. If they get them wrong, that's okay, mark the correct ones and then let them keep playing until they get it right. Pre-place some of the more difficult ones. Give hints. Add symbols or simple drawings to the names.

Station 3: Turn the questions into multiple choice or True or False questions. Have a helper work with the students to think through the questions (without telling them the answers).

Attachments:

Attached to the end of this lesson here at rotation.org are the following PDFs

Scorekeeper Timesheet.pdf (1 page)

Matching the Quote Game pdf (2 pages for Game Station 2)

Jacob-Tree.pdf (3 pages for Game Station 2)

Jacob Esau Question Cards.pdf (2 pages for Games Station 3)

Also attached are the 3 original graphic files for Station 2's Jacob-Tree activity — for those who want the graphics so they can enlarge them on a copier.

Written by *Group Effort!* Neil MacQueen, with help from Jaymie Derden and Luanne Payne, and suggestions from Amy Crane and Wendy Sempf.